

I Guess This Is Goodbye by urdearestmom

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Summary: This was written for the Amino One Year Big Bang Challenge. The requirements were that we had to choose a type of conflict (person vs self, person vs society, person vs person) and write a story based around it. No spoilers in here haha! Choose to read it if you dare.

I Guess This Is Goodbye

Mike used to be a happy kid. He lived a pretty good life. He may not have been very popular at school, but he had a few close friends and a family that loved him. That was really all he needed.

When he was twelve, a girl was found in the rain. He brought her home and gave her warmth and kindness, the first person (other than Benny) to have ever done so. He gave her something else, too, something Benny hadn't realized she didn't have: a name.

That name was El.

He had only known her for a week, and yet their connection was so powerful. He wouldn't ever understand why, all he knew was that that was the way it was.

At the end of that week, she had sacrificed herself to save Mike and his friends from the monster that came from another dimension. What followed was a period of deep mourning for Mike. He couldn't understand why he was so upset, because really it had only been a week and how much difference can it make to know someone for a week? But she was missing and nobody knew if she was okay.

After she disappeared, Mike had become a shadow of his former self. It was easier to pretend she had never existed, pretend like none of what had happened in that week had actually happened. But by doing so, Mike was erasing a part of his life that had greatly affected him. It was like pretending one of your family members had died when you knew they really hadn't. He didn't want to believe she was dead. He wouldn't- *couldn't* - believe that. So he held on to the flimsiest of hopes.

As the months passed however, Mike began to lose his grip on that hope. It was almost as though before, he had been losing his grip on reality by thinking that there was any possibility that she was alive. Now, he had fallen back into real life and was being forced to realize that she should have returned by now. But she hadn't. So what other explanation could there be other than 'she's dead'?

There wasn't. And that shattered Mike.

So he tried his best to be like his old self, happy, upbeat, and generally excited about life and the things in it. This type of behaviour was mostly to fool his parents and placate his sister and friends, he didn't really feel anything anymore. Mike figured it was because in that one week with El, he had *felt* more than he had ever felt in his short lifespan. She brought something special into his life, something that was like a fire, in some ways. It brought heat to his cheeks and colour and light to his universe. The word, it might've been love. Mike just didn't realize.

To the outside world, it might have seemed that Mike was improving. In truth, he was worsening. He had started to eat less and less, frequently feigning sickness so that he wouldn't be forced to consume anything. Before bed, Mike would purposely set his alarm to wake him later than necessary so that he wouldn't have time for a proper breakfast the next morning. At school he would lie and say he had eaten his lunch in class when the teacher wasn't looking. In the afternoons he would eat maybe an apple or a thin slice of cheese, if only to remove his mother's watchful eyes. At dinner, he would take a small serving and spread it around his plate to make it look like more than it really was. At first, Mike didn't even realize he was doing so. But once he did, he tried to stop himself.

What am I doing this is crazy I can't starve myself I'll die

But if I die I can see her again

No I can't do this I'm only thirteen this is ridiculous I'm not dying now

This was the recurring cycle in Mike's head at every meal time, but he ignored his inner voice and continued not eating. Food was now tasteless and he found no joy in eating it, so why should he continue? He had also become a bit of a recluse, withdrawing from his friends outside of school. He always had homework to do, because we're in eighth grade now guys, come on! Or he would be sick, preventing him from writing new campaigns, which kept the group from playing D & D and therefore out of his house and away from him. Mike eventually came to the conclusion that he was distancing himself from people because he wanted to be left alone.

That's fine what's wrong with being alone everybody wants to be alone sometimes

I know that's not really why

Yes it is why else would I do it

Mike refused to acknowledge what it truly was until one night when he came to the kitchen for a glass of water and heard his parents talking in the living room.

"-about him, Ted,"

That was his mother, and Mike immediately caught on to the fact that they were talking about him.

"There's no need to worry, Karen, I'm sure he's fine."

Dad not caring about anything that doesn't pertain to himself, as usual.

"No, he's not, Ted! Haven't you noticed he barely eats? Never speaks anymore! He used to be such a happy boy, always excited about everything. His friends used to come over every weekend to play! Now he just comes home and goes straight up to his room to do his homework, comes down for dinner, and goes back up."

Mike supposed that was true, but he also thought that his mother was exaggerating a bit. He did say some things, sometimes, it wasn't like he *never* spoke.

"Well, what's wrong with that?"

Thanks Dad, for once I agree with you.

Mike was about to leave it there and go back up to bed, but he decided to stay and hear what Karen had to say.

"What's wrong with that? What's wrong with that is that it's not Michael! That is not our son! I think he's depressed and I'm worried what he might do if he doesn't get help," she added.

It struck Mike at that moment that that was exactly what it was. But

he didn't need help, no sirree, no such nonsense for Mike Wheeler! He just needed to suck it up and get over it. She was dead and that was all there was to it.

Ted snorted.

"Karen please, he's a thirteen year old boy, what could he possibly be depressed about? I'm not having any son of mine go to a shrink, the people'll think he's a nutcase and I'm not bringing that kind of shame on this family. It's already bad enough that he and Nancy were involved in that scandal with the Byerses in November, we don't need any more attention."

Karen made an angry noise.

"I don't care what the people will think! I care about my son's wellbeing! It's like he's dead in a living body, Ted. He might as well be if he keeps this up."

"He's fine. It's just a phase, he's at that age. He'll be over it soon if you leave him be."

Mike agreed, but was also angered by his father's easy dismissal of strange behaviour. This was a clear example of *Ted Wheeler, The Man Who Doesn't Give A Shit About Anything!*

At this thought Mike decided to leave. He was sure the conversation was nearly over, and he didn't feel like being caught eavesdropping.

I'm not depressed I'm just upset but I'll be a man and I'll get over it

I'll get over it, I'll get over it, I'll get over it

I'll MAN up and get over it

There came a point (around the end of September 1984, when Mike was lying in the basement fort by himself sweating some more weight off because it was unusually hot that day) when Mike realized he didn't want to live anymore. There was no reason for him to exist, not with El gone, and he didn't think anyone would really mind if he died anyway.

Well, his mom and Nancy maybe, but definitely not his dad. Holly was too young to get it, and she would only barely remember having an older brother once she grew up.

This led him to another realization: this was why he had pushed his friends away. He wanted to die, and if he distanced himself from them they would be less affected when he did.

Why, though, why do I want to die I'm thirteen don't I have so much to live for

He supposed he did, but that nothing was really so important as El. He felt that his one purpose in life was to help her and love her, but he couldn't exactly do that if she was dead, could he? And if he couldn't fulfill his life's purpose then what was the point of his existence?

Mike thought that not existing at all was preferable to his current circumstances. Many days he had trouble getting out of bed because he really didn't see a reason why he should have to. It wasn't pain anymore, he was so numbed to everything that he couldn't even force himself to feel upset about El's death. It was as if Mike's soul had dissolved with her when she killed the Demogorgon. He was no longer Mike Wheeler, he was just a shell.

It was at his birthday in March, shortly after he had noticed he hadn't been eating properly for a while, that Mike noticed he also hadn't been truthfully presenting himself for a while either. The gang was all there: Dustin, Will, Lucas, and their new friend Max (Mike had also noticed that both Lucas and Dustin liked Max, but he could not bring himself to find humour in the situation). They were playing the first D & D campaign Mike had written in a long while. Things were going great for the boys and Max, as luck would have it they had rolled just enough each time to complete their moves. After Max made a particularly risky decision and it ended up resulting in the defeat of an evil warlock the party was confronting, the four of them jumped up and yelled with glee. It was pure unadulterated joy, provided to them by the creators of Dungeons and Dragons as well as their fabulous dungeon master Mike.

Said dungeon master on the other hand, felt nothing. He understood

why his friends were celebrating, and he didn't want them to think he wasn't having a ball too, so he stood up and yelled with them. If he was to remain true to his feelings, Mike would have stayed seated, most likely without a smile. His smiles were fake anyway. His face had forgotten how to make them.

It was upon that occasion that he reflected while he was in the blanket fort. He thought that since his friends hadn't noticed he was faking everything nowadays, then they weren't as close to him as they used to be. This allowed him to really contemplate the idea of his death. Before, it had just been a passing thought, no more than a fleeting idea. On this day, however, Mike began to form a concrete plan of how it would happen.

He resolved that he would tell his mom he was going for a walk in the woods or something, but instead he would go to the quarry. He might elect to sit there for a while, or he might just jump as soon as he got there. That wasn't a decision to be made in the planning stage, but rather in the moment. He might even write his mom a letter explaining everything. Mike would give her an extra tight hug before he left, she not knowing it would be the last, he hoping to at least offer his mother some comfort in the times ahead.

Mike decided that since he already had a plan there was no sense in waiting around, so he prepared to leave. He tidied the basement before exiting by way of the stairs. His mom was nowhere to be found, forcing Mike to go look for Nancy. His sister told him that their mother had gone to the supermarket and would return in about half an hour. She found it quite strange that Mike was waiting to ask their mother if he could go out instead of just leaving like he usually did. Nancy thought that that was extremely non-Mike behaviour, but then nowadays everything Mike did was non-Mike behaviour. Except she had seen something in his face... almost like regret. But what could he be regretting?

Mike turned on the TV and what could be showing but an Eggo commercial. He watched it listlessly, Eggos were bland now just like every other food he had ever liked. When that was over, an episode of He-Man came on. It had become one of Mike's favourite TV shows almost as soon as it first aired in September 1983. He watched it now simply because he had nothing better to do. It was not as interesting

as it had once been and he had already seen this episode anyway.

When the episode was almost over, Karen returned from the supermarket. Mike immediately switched off the television and got up to help her bring in the groceries. It was not something Mike usually did unless told to, which made Karen think that perhaps Ted was right, maybe Michael was getting better because she had left him alone.

Once all the groceries were in the house, Mike turned to his mother.

"Mom, can I go out for a walk in the woods? I think it might be cooler in there with all the shade from the trees," he asked.

Karen was then convinced that Michael had to be getting better, he never wanted to leave the house and now he was finally asking to!

"Of course, honey! Just make sure to be back before dark."

"Thanks, Mom." He proceeded to give her the tightest hug he could remember giving her and walked out the door.

Karen was pleasantly surprised. He really seemed to be improving!

About a half-hour after Mike had departed, Nancy came rushing down the stairs.

"Mom, did you let Mike leave?"

Karen was confused. Why was this suddenly concerning Nancy?

"Yes, he hasn't wanted to leave the house in a while so I let him go. Why?"

Nancy blanched.

"Mom, he hasn't been in his right mind for *months*, did you think of what he might do by himself out in the woods? Oh my god, I'm going to look for him!"

Nancy grabbed the car keys off the counter and sprinted outside.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town Mike had just sat down near the rocky outcropping he had jumped off the last time he was at the quarry. He had decided to stick around and contemplate life for a bit. Why was it so fragile, and why, particularly, did he want to end his own but knew that he oughtn't do it?

He supposed this must be a simple case of trying to balance what he wanted with what was expected of him. Mike knew that he himself didn't want to go on living any longer. He also knew that news of a suicide, especially in a small town like Hawkins, would spread quickly. In addition to that, the Bible itself said that suicide is a sin and you're never allowed into Heaven because of it. He wasn't exactly a devout Christian, but many townspeople were and Mike knew his family would get hell for it. It wasn't like Mike really cared for anything anymore, but he was aware of what the repercussions of his actions could be for his family and he wanted them to be happy. If he couldn't be happy then they could be happy for him.

So should he jump or not?

Nancy was going insane. She couldn't locate her brother anywhere. She had looked near the Byers' place, even asking Jonathan out of the house for help. She had asked Will if Mike had said anything to him about going somewhere (he hadn't).

Nancy took to the woods by Hawkins Middle, searching fruitlessly for fifteen minutes before giving up and deciding that Mike wouldn't have come hang out by school anyway. She went into the woods near all of Mike's favourite stores (which really weren't many, and personally for him had dwindled to none as they no longer brought him joy).

Finally, collapsing exhaustedly in the driver's seat after having been out for an hour, a thought struck her. Nancy could have pulled her hair out, she was so angry at herself. How could she not have thought of this earlier? The quarry! If Mike was going to do anything that would endanger his life it would be at the quarry. Luckily for Nancy, she wasn't very far from it.

When she arrived on the path that overlooked the dangerous jumping-off point, she had been hoping to see Mike somewhere.

Unfortunately, the area was completely devoid of people.

"Mike!"

Nancy's voice echoed, but there was no answer.

"Mike!"

Silence.

"MIKE!"

Still nothing in return.

Nancy let out a half-sob, hoping for the best but fearing the worst had already happened before she got there. She approached the edge of the outcropping, afraid to look down because of what she might see. She had to force herself to turn her head in the direction of the water.

Clear and smooth as far as the eye could see. No floating body, no pieces of clothing bobbing to the surface. Nothing at all. An eerie calm seemed to settle over Nancy and she immediately knew that Mike was alright. She could feel it, just as she would have been able to feel it if something terrible *had* happened to him. He was probably at home right now, making their mother wonder why Nancy had been so worried about nothing. She would explain herself later, but it would have to be when Mike couldn't hear. Nancy was just happy that she hadn't seen anything out of the ordinary.

When Mike got home, Nancy was pulling up in the driveway. She slammed the car door with such force that he jumped and turned to look at her.

"Mike! Oh my god!" She ran towards him and snatched him up in a hug. "I was so worried about you!"

Mike deduced that Nancy must have suspected what he had left to do and had gone after him, and resolved that he would have to be less obvious the next time he went out.

"I'm fine, Nance," he mumbled against her jacket. "Don't know what

you were so worried about."

Nancy pulled away and looked him in the face.

"Yeah. You're okay. That's what matters."

Mike raised his eyebrows.

"Why wouldn't I be?"

His sister shrugged.

"You weren't going to...do something?"

She knew. Somehow she knew.

She'll try to stop me next time and I can't let her

"I don't know what you're talking about. I went out for a walk in the woods, thought it might be cooler in the shade, you know?"

Nancy nodded.

"Yeah. Yeah, I guess you're right." She laughed. "I must be going insane. Sorry, Mike."

"S'ok. You coming inside?"

"Yeah, I'm coming."

Nancy was relieved. She decided to put it to the back of her mind.

Mike, however, went back down to the basement. This time he reclined on the couch. Why hadn't he jumped like he'd wanted to? Here he was, back at home, still without her.

When he was at the cliff, he had decided he could still go and his family would be fine. They'd probably be better off without him, they didn't need a nutcase messing up the family name. Ted had made that perfectly clear.

However, as Mike had been preparing to step off the edge, eerily similar to the last time he'd been there, he had felt some kind of force

pushing him back. Almost like what El had done to stop him in mid-air and pull him back up to the top of the cliff. He could have sworn he heard a voice telling him not to jump. In two years, when Mike would read Stephen King's novel *It*, he would remember the events of September 1984 with shocking clarity when he read about the Turtle. What happened on that day was nearly the same as what happened in the book. It was a voice that he seemed to hear in his head but at the same time it came from all around him, from the earth and the water and the trees.

Don't do it Mike don't there's people that care about you

Don't jump it'll get better I promise

I promise

So he hadn't jumped. Mike would return to the quarry in a few days, and a handful of times after that, but on none of those occasions would he jump over the edge. Which was a good thing, because Eleven suddenly returned to Hawkins a month later.

When she was found, he cried and yelled at her, but his heart and soul were halfway back to good as new. She was *here*. She was alive and well, and she was with him.

Over time, Mike and El grew closer until the day he confessed his feelings and asked her out. They were in high school, and Mike was absolutely head over heels for the girl. She said yes, and out they went. Years later, he would tell her exactly what he was feeling in the long moments of silence between his question and her answer, and she would slap him in the back of the head for being idiotic enough to think she would say no.

In November of 1993, exactly ten years to the day they met, they would get married and they would celebrate surrounded by all of their family and friends. The event oozed love and felicity from every corner. It was a beautiful day, even though it rained later in the evening. They were happy.

Of course, the best people never get to be happy for very long. It only lasted six years. It was March of 1999. Mike and El were making the

drive from their home in Indianapolis to Hawkins because Holly was on spring break from her first year of college. They had seen her at Christmas, but she and El missed each other. Mike could do well without seeing Nancy or Holly, but his wife sometimes got tired of him and wanted his sisters instead. Nancy lived in New York with Jonathan these days so it was difficult to see her, but since Holly was back in Hawkins for a week and Indianapolis wasn't far they decided to visit. They had some very exciting news to deliver to their families anyway, so the trip was worth it.

"Hey, El?"

She turned her head to look at him.

"Yeah?"

"You know I love you more than anything right?"

"I know, Mike. You say it at least once a day. That won't be for much longer though," she laughed, looking at her belly.

Mike laughed.

"You're right. Not with that little one coming! What do you think we're going to name it?"

"Calm down, Mike, it's not due till November! We've got lots of time."

They had stopped at a gas station off IN-37 to fill up before continuing their journey, as they were running low on fuel and still had about another hour and fifteen minutes to go. While Mike was inside the shop paying for the refill, he heard another car come screeching into the lot. It didn't stop, but he heard the shots clear enough before the car disappeared back up the road. He dropped his change and it scattered all over the floor, but neither Mike nor the owner cared as one ran out and the other called the police.

From across the parking lot, Mike could see that two shots had punctured the driver side door of his and El's blue Honda Prelude. The windshield was broken and one of the headlights was barely hanging on to the front of the car.

OHMYGOD EL

"El!"

When he came around the other side, Mike saw that his worst nightmare had come true. El was hurt, and badly.

He wrenched open her door and she fell out, hanging by her seatbelt.

Nonononono

He held her up and unbuckled her belt, easing the dead weight out of the car onto the ground. There were copious amounts of blood gushing out of El's neck and chest, and the passenger side of the car was covered in it. Her eyes were closed and her chest wasn't moving.

"El!"

No response. He shook her, spraying blood all over himself, but to no avail. She was dead, there was no way a person could survive direct shots and being stabbed with shards of glass as big as the ones impaled in her arms and torso. Not even a person with abilities like hers. He broke into tears, hugging her limp body to his chest tightly as if by squeezing hard enough he could save her. It felt like there was a knife being repeatedly plunged into his heart.

When the cops arrived on the scene ten minutes later, they saw a shaking man hugging a woman's body in the parking lot. They were both stained red. They tried to get the man away so they could begin investigating, but he screamed at them with so much rage and hate in his eyes that they backed away, sensing danger. Once the investigation was complete, the incident would be filed away as a random drive-by shooting. Mike and El had simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time and it had unfortunately resulted in her death.

Holly Wheeler was not waiting on a call that afternoon, she was waiting for her dorky brother and his awesome wife to arrive in an hour. When she answered, she thought it might be Mike calling to tell her that they were just now leaving their house and would be later than expected. She was right in guessing that it was Mike, but she did

not at all anticipate the subject matter.

Holly froze when Mike told her he would be late, she could tell something was wrong from the tone of his voice. It was hoarse and scratchy; he sounded like he had had a good shouting match, or had just cried.

"Is El okay?" she asked.

Mike tried to suck it in, but he started crying again.

"No- no, she's not!"

Holly clutched the phone in terror, waiting for him to continue.

"We stopped to fill up on gas, and- and I was in the shop paying, but then there was a car that drove through and shot at our car, and when I got there she was- she was- she's dead, Holly!"

Holly dropped the phone. She stared at it hanging by the cord, bouncing up and down. Mike was crying so loudly that she could hear him even though the phone was by her feet.

How could El be dead? She was supposed to be coming down with Mike for a week hanging out with Holly. As she picked up the phone, Holly noticed how badly her hand was shaking. On the other end of the line, Mike sounded like he was dry heaving and had the whooping cough at the same time.

"M-Mike?"

"Yeah?"

"I'll-I'll tell Mom. She's not home right now, but I'll tell her."

"Okay, Hol. I don't- I'm not sure how long it'll be till I get there, I- I don't know what the cops want to do with- with- with El." His sentences were punctuated by sobs.

"You take however long you need, Mikey. I'll see you- later." There was a resurgence of Holly's old nickname for her brother for reasons unknown. She wished she could have said she'd see them both later.

When Karen returned (from the supermarket, funnily enough), she found her youngest child sitting in the front hall by the phone table. She had her head down on her knees and appeared to be crying.

"Holly! What's wrong, honey?"

Holly looked up at her mother with red-rimmed eyes. She shook her hair away from her face and stood up only to crash into her mother's embrace.

"Mike- Mike called," she hiccuped into Karen's shoulder.

Karen was struck cold with fear. Whatever Michael had called about, it couldn't be good.

"He- he's going to be late but he doesn't know how- how long he'll take. He and El were at a gas station and then there were some shooters and El- El- El's dead!"

What?

"She's dead?"

Holly nodded.

"Oh God."

Hours later, there was a knock at the door. Karen had called Joyce and told her the horrible news and she was now at the Wheeler house awaiting Mike's arrival. When Karen opened the door, Mike fell through it like a dead man, covered in blood that wasn't his own. He collapsed on her, bawling in his mother's arms like he had as a baby. Karen felt tears slide down her cheeks as she held her son. What did he ever do to deserve a life with so much heartbreak? Holly joined them in the front hall, with Joyce wrapping her arms as far around the three Wheelers as she could. *There should be four Wheelers here*, she thought, *and we should have been happy to see each other*.

Once Mike had managed to calm himself enough to speak, he explained what had happened. After he had called Holly, he had gone back out to the lot where the police had questioned him on what happened. Then they bundled El (he refused to refer to her as a *body*)

into an ambulance that had pulled up earlier. He followed in the destroyed car. It dropped her off at the closest police station, where she was being kept in the morgue. Following this Mike had been allowed to leave and he drove down to Hawkins in his bullet-ridden and bloody car, eyes blurring intermittently when he remembered that there was no one in the car next to him. Several times he had had to pull over because he couldn't see or was already crying again.

"We had news, and now we'll never be able to give it to you guys, and I just-" He broke into sobs for the second time since he had gotten there.

Karen rubbed his hair soothingly.

"What was the news, sweetie?" asked Joyce.

Mike shook his head, burying it deeper in Karen's arms. He mumbled something.

"What did you say, Mikey?" Holly's first words in hours.

Mike suddenly wrenched himself from his mother's grip.

"She was pregnant! We were going to have a baby! We were going to have- and now- I-"

He made a noise, almost like a screech, but extremely pained. They could all be upset over El, but no one would ever reach the level of pain Mike was feeling. They would never understand.

Mike knew he couldn't last long without her. And this time he knew she was really gone. He had held her as her body cooled and his terror mounted.

Mike made the decision to leave after her funeral. Leave permanently, that is. He couldn't do life without his love, so what was the point? This was the same mindset he had had when he was thirteen. It had been fifteen years since but it was the same thing he was feeling now that he had felt then, except this time it was heightened by grief for their unborn child.

God what did I ever do to deserve this

El was buried in Hawkins' only cemetery a few days later. Nancy and Jonathan flew in from New York, and Dustin, Lucas, and Will all came in from across the country too. The universe must have been playing a joke on Mike, because one of the saddest days of his life was one of the most beautiful. The sky was cloudless and it wasn't windy, which was extremely out of character for the time of year. Afterwards, Mike borrowed Holly's car and went back to Indianapolis for a few weeks to tell his editors he was desisting writing his novel, sell the house, and pack up everything he and El had owned, then moved back in with his parents (Holly flew back to college instead of driving). The day after he moved back in, Mike went down to the kitchen for a drink of water and heard his parents talking about him again. Was he going to be magically transported to thirteen when El was missing but still alive? Why was everything so similar to that time? he wondered. Was the universe messing with him?

"He has to get a job, I won't stand for an adult living under our roof and not contributing." Ted was saying.

Mike really didn't understand why his father was even still around, it was obvious he never cared about a single thing but himself and how his family presented to the outside world. Didn't he get that Mike's wife and unborn baby had just *died*?

"Ted! His wife just died, that's ridiculous!"

Mike thought it quite funny that his mother always verbally defended him but never actually did anything to contradict what his father said, even if it was obvious that she didn't agree with him.

"He's nearly thirty years old, Karen. He's a man. He should know how to deal with things. And I never liked that girl much anyway."

Makes sense

You never liked me much either, Dad.

"Just because you don't understand what love is doesn't mean your son doesn't! You've never loved me or any of us but that doesn't discredit what Michael feels and is feeling right now. You're a horrible man, Ted."

Huh, after nearly thirty-five years of marriage, she finally calls him out on it. Geez, Mom, how long'd it take for you to realize?

"And she was a wonderful woman, for your information." Karen stormed onto the staircase and up to bed without noticing Mike in the kitchen.

She was, and I'll see her again soon

Two days later, Karen Wheeler had to report her son missing. She waited twenty-four hours and when Mike didn't come home she called the police. Jim Hopper was no longer chief, but he still worked at the station some days and it was he that answered her call.

"Hopper, Michael's missing. He left yesterday afternoon and I haven't seen him since."

"Alright, Karen, we'll get to looking for him."

A few hours later, Ted answered the phone and was told that a car registered to one Holly Wheeler had been found parked up at the top of the quarry. Mike had been found floating in the water below, lifeless. Hopper also informed him that a letter addressed to Karen, Nancy, and Holly had been left on the driver's seat of the car. Later that night, Karen would lie in bed clutching the letter with stinging eyes and a burning heart, thinking *that's the second funeral in as many months.*

13/05/99

Dear Mom, Nancy, and Holly,

If you're reading this it means I'm dead. I'm sorry, but I can't live life without her. I know you'll miss me, but just know that I loved the three of you and I always will even though I'm not here to share it with you. Mom, I never told you that I almost killed myself when El was gone the first time but I think Nancy knew. I couldn't do it then and I can't do it now. Live without her, I mean. I came to the quarry with intentions to jump but then I didn't because I heard a voice. It promised me that things would get better and that there were people that loved me so I shouldn't do it. Today there is no voice. Now that I think about it, it must have been El. She must

have been watching me from wherever she was and making sure nothing happened. Today there's no voice because she's really gone and I can't do this anymore. Thanks for being the best mom you could be. Nance, you were the greatest big sister ever and there's nothing more I could have asked for. You were my role model growing up even if I pretended not to like you very much. Hol, I'm sorry about borrowing your car but I guess you can have it back now since I won't need it. You were an amazing little sister (much less annoying than you could have been) and I know you looked up to me as your older brother but Nancy is a much better role model than I am and even so I know you'll grow up to be a fantastic woman. El and I will always be watching over you. Try not to forget about us as life passes you by. Tell Dad that now he doesn't have to worry about his only son looking like a nutcase and smearing the family name. Tell the guys and everybody else I'll miss them and that I loved them too. One day we'll all see each other again, I know it. Until then, I guess this is goodbye.

Love,

Mike